

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA

THE HEART OF LIFE ♡ A Book of Verse by ♡ ♡

ETHEL ASHTON EDWARDS



Cambridge
Bowes & Bowes
1909

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA
SAN DIEGO

4 | 12 | 09.

THE HEART OF
LIFE ♡ A Book
of Verse by ♡ ♡

ETHEL ASHTON EDWARDS

Cambridge
Bowes & Bowes
1909

I wish to offer my best thanks to the Editors of
The Athenæum, *The Outlook*, *The Academy* and *The
Pall Mall Gazette* for permission to reprint certain
verses in this book.

THE HEART OF LIFE

Time was I feared to meet my human friend,
Lest voice of earth should silence heavenlier song;
I would draw near to Nature; she should send
Diviner music, tender and more strong.

So must I flee the love of human kind,
The little human hands held out in vain,
To seek the woodland and the whispering wind,
And learn the sweet slow music of the rain.

But, now no voice pleads ever, hands are cold
That not in life shall hold my hands again,
The wind's song is not wistful as of old,
And ah! the dreadful sobbing of the rain!

GREAT POSSESSIONS

It's the fading of the flowers, and the failing of the light,
It's not the gate of Death we dread ;
It's the ugliness of age, and the dream of dreadful night,
It's the way that they forget us when we're dead.
It's the paling of the beauty and the love and the desire,
It's the folding of the wings, and the quenching of the fire,
Oh ! it's not the future judgment, nor the fear of penance
dire,...
It's the knowing there are others in our stead.

It's the breaking of the fetter, it's the bleeding of the
heart,
It's not the gate of Death we dread ;
It's the living—living on—all unwanted and apart,
It's the dream that all the dearest things are dead.
It's the loneliness of living when the loved of life are lost,
It's the dreadfulness of pausing—and counting up the
cost ;
There are things we dread in dying—but it's these we
dread the most.
God of Pity ! give us something in their stead.

AFTERSIGHT

I at Love's footstool lie—
I cannot sing for thinking of Love slain—
 Love that in bitter pain
Cried; and I gave no heed unto the cry.

So fair lies Love, and still—
One would not dream that he had come from fight.
 And yet, through bitterest night
He wrestled—and alone—to work his will.

One pale star gleams above;
So shone Love's eyes upon me through their tears.
 Ah! in eternal years
How shall I bear to meet the eyes of Love?

THE DWARF

Pent in his little house of clay,
A man's great soul within his eyes
Looks out on me, as day by day
He toils beneath these heavy skies.

A clumsy hovel for the soul,
That earth-bound body of its shame,
Yet, far within, how fair and whole
Dwells the bright life I call by name.

Ever he strives with day by day,
And, constant, looks to death, the goal,
"For God shall bless me then, men say,
With some bright body for my soul."

When his soul's body he shall wear,
It will be pure without, within,
And wonderfully shaped to bear
Whatever glory he shall win.

Because that here, throughout the strife,
He hated ugliness and dreamt
Still constant, of the perfect life,
Nor knew the baseness of contempt.

But lived for all he knew most fair,
And ever held most pure and dear
Those favourites of our God who wear
Their soul's bright body now and here.

MOTHERS OF KINGS

God sets a space in Paradise the fair,
Where silence reigns ; and life's most lovely things
Light the high places of the women there,
Mothers of Kings.

Long lifted up on Time's unfolded wings,
None greater than themselves nor any less,
Where pain nor parting mar their blessedness
They wait their kings.

They brood upon great pasts—a splendid day,
Conquest and pageant and a glory done,
And ever shines about their wondrous way
Life unbegun.

For, sacred in the memory of things
Dwells the still birth-hour and the dread they knew
Which was their glory—glory of the few,
Mothers of Kings.

ISOLATION

There is a dread I know by night,
And sometimes in the sunlit day,
When all around me slips away
To lose me in the Infinite.

The earth's a veil, a veil the sky;
I cannot touch, nor hear, nor see;
What is, is just a part of me,
There is naught else but only I.

FROM THE UNKNOWN

A strange thing came to me to-night,
As in my room I sat alone,
A sudden presence, out of sight,
A voiceless voice, a known unknown.

There was no movement in the room,
There was no footfall on the stone,
Yet, sudden, through the breathless gloom
I knew that I was not alone.

A SONG OF BEREAVEMENT

Out of the infinite loneliness,

 Out of the silence that wraps me round,
Take my hands for your hands to bless,
Lift my face to your face, no less ;
 So I, who was lost, am found.

Out of the infinite pain of life,

 Out of the cry at the heart of things,
Send your voice with its scorn of strife,
Breathe your peace where the storm is rife;
 So I, who was lame, find wings.

Out of the death and the shapeless sod,

 Out of the graves and the dust they give,
Leave your step where the saints have trod,
Leave your love with its life in God;
 So I, who was dead, yet live.

“LUCIFER, STAR OF THE MORNING”

He fell as from the height of Heaven,
By all his peerlessness he fell,
Farther than common man may fall,
Even from Heaven unto Hell.

They must have seen it, those old worlds—
Far worlds that spin their wheels of light—
And marvelled such a splendid star
Should speed to sempiternal night.

A SONG OF SELF

From this most lonely place
I watch the great world go her careless way;
For me, I walk all day
As one that holds a mirror to his face,

Since all my time I stand
As I were watching how another stood,
Watching, for grave or good,
Some self, sole friend in this so lonely land.

How should this strange thing be—
That, day by day, I pass alone, and yet
In dread and ceaseless fret
I stand to watch another self in me!

TO A PICTURE

*Our Friends are like pictures which colour the walls
of our House of Life.... And the house takes much of its
character from the pictures.*

Within this house of life I call my own,
This hushed and curtained inner house of mine
There hangs one picture, loftily alone,
Lamp-guarded, as a shrine.

You see how bare the walls are of delight,
How dark this whole deep hidden house of mine ;
Yet, for that one clear-featured face in light
I hold it as a shrine.

And, climbing wearily, through earth-bound mists,
I find that Peace pervades this house of mine,
And write it true that Life in Love consists,
A truth learnt slowly...

Kneeling at a shrine.

THE GREATER LOVE

Two loves I ever hold apart:
 Two loves, to make my life complete.
One holds me folded to his heart,
 One draws me to his feet.

And he who loves as humans love,
 I give him part, but not the whole;
And he who loves as God above
 Has all my heart and soul!

A SONG OF REMEMBRANCE

I and my heart alone,
 In a world so fair,
Found nothing to call our own
 Of all that was there.

I and my heart forgot,
 In the tears that we shed,
All but the things that are not...
 All but the dead.

THE THREE GUESTS

Pale Angel Pain came close to me, just for a brief
dread space,
I knew him by his broken wing and the tears upon
his face.

And after him, with blinded eyes, drew Fear, a presence
dim,
And by his face of dread I knew there was no help in
him.

And now, beside my bed to-night, a darker angel stands,
There's peace within his shaded eyes, the light of
far-off lands,
And for the cup of sleep he brings I stretch out both
my hands.

THE QUEENE'S RIDE

The Queene rode forth by thorp and field,
(The Queene's face was most fair);
Two and two, from chase, at eve,
 The knights came riding there.
The King was dead, a year and a day,
And the month was May.

Came her old Love riding by,
 Her old Love was so true.
“I never will with maiden wed,
 My Queene, for love of you,
For love of you,” he said,
“My Queene,” he said.

“I have been East, I have been West,
 One told me you were dead”;
(The Queene's eyes were so blue, so blue,
 The Queene's mouth was so red)...
“Dearest,” the sweet Queene said...
“Heart's Dearest,” she said.

ILLUSION

Faith ! and I see her ride,
 The silver-flying Fay,
Whose name is Youth-and-May,
Whose name is Time-and-Tide ;
Whose name is Fly-so-fleet,
 Live-long, Love-true, Sleep-sound,
Whose name is Passing-sweet,
 The whole world round.

Soft ! shall I touch her wings?...
 But, faith ! the Fay had fled !
 “O'er wold and wild,” she said
“I'll dream you deathless things.
And over Night and Day,
 For all are mine !” she cried....
And oh ! the wonder-way
 She rides...I ride....

SNOW SONG

“Hush !” she said ; “Do you know,” she said,
“What the daisies do when the day is dead?”

“No,” he smiled; “No, indeed,” he smiled;
And the snow snowed on, and the wind blew wild.

“See,” she wept; “Do you see,” she wept,
“How the snow lies white where the rose has slept?”

“Nay,” he cried; “Come away,” he cried;
“The snow is a garment fit for a bride.”

NIGHT-FALL

Oh, light in the sky !
 Oh, stars in the night !
 Oh, sunset bright !...
But the day must die.

Oh, light of my life,
 Now the sun is low,
 And the fire fades slow
From the heart's red strife,

That the day should die
 With no sunset bright,
 No stars in the night,
No light in the sky !

THE FOOL'S SONG

Fools in motley, three,
Trod the country side,
Begging far and wide,
Thou and I and he.

Still, I beg for bread,
Oftener get a stone,
While he, the first, is wed,
And thou, O ! luckiest of fools,
In the churchyard lone,
Hast no need of bread.

MY SONGS

Ask you how came my Songs

So ever-dimmed with tears and marred with pain,
So weary-wan with chanting human wrongs
Again and yet again?

See you, I looked on men,

And saw how loneliness had wrapped them round ;
Their strife, their failure and their loss ; and then
I wept o'er all I found.

And lo ! these same slow tears

I ever shed above earth's bitterest wrongs—
Love passed them tenderly through patient years
And hushed them into songs.

PORTRAITS

I

God made you very fair;
I cannot dream He meant you to be lost;
At what tremendous cost
Could Earth supply such wealth of golden hair?

That pansied arch above,
Nor all the shining vast of morning skies,
Could make two wistful eyes
Like those through which I read your loan of love.

Not all the rose's heart
Nor heart of ev'ry summer-breathing rose
That ever buds and blows
Could match those lips your laughter kissed apart.

And so I have no fear;
Your beauty lives; I have no fear for you;
Your soul grows lovely too
In His pure light who holds all beauty dear.

God loves you, and no less;
Death leaves you as He made you—very fair;
Your beauty and His care
Shall wake your very soul to loveliness.

II

You were not beautiful—and yet
Such level brows—such quiet eyes
It was as when a sun-ray dies
And leaves us breathless with regret.

Not beautiful, I said.... And then
I looked again.... And lo ! I knew
That all the beauty in the world
Began, and lived, and died with you.

III

I met with one upon my way
Who, in the measure of our day,
Saw clearly where we only pray.

And for the beauty of his face
I left all else a little space
To gaze upon so great a grace.

I saw no self—God reigned instead;
I saw no self—all self was dead;
“I have seen God to-day,” I said.

IV

I said "She shall not know the voice of Pain,"
So young and glad the lovely way she wore
Her sixteen summers; till I looked again
And saw the sign I had not seen before,

Upon her lips and eyes worn carelessly
A laughter pitifully near to tears,
The surety of much sorrow in few years,
The earnest of some dread Gethsemane.

V

Earth had no hold on her—

Only earth's beauty;—for the rest earth's pain

Fell ceaselessly,—as some relentless rain...

She found no comforter.

And just to-day she died....

I looked upon her, and was quieted;

A lily in her hand, and overhead

The weary figure of Christ Crucified.

VI

THE WELL-BELOVED

There were two paths before him spread,
There were two songs for him to sing ;
To all fair things the one path led,
One song his soul to peace should bring :
 Yet all his life he chose the wrong—
 The other path, the other song.

There was a hand stretched out to him,
He walked alone and scorned the hand.
There was a lamp, when day was dim,
To light him through a lonely land.
 In darkness and perplexity,
 Yet scorning hand and lamp, went he.

And all his day he looked for light,
And loved the path he would not tread ;
And all his heart was set on right,
Yet faltering, fell on wrong instead.
 The dark swept down and drowned the day
 And found him fallen by the way.

A dreadful silence smote his soul,
His cry was all of loneliness :
“ Oh ! for a lamp to light the goal,
Oh ! for a hand to heal and bless ”....
 And lo ! One stood with hand and light
 To give him shelter from that night.

A CHILD'S SONGS

I

Things-as-they-ought-to-be
Woke up one day,
Harnessed an eagle and
Went on his way.

"I'll choose a safe path," said
Things-as-they-are;
Things-as-they-ought-to-be
Rode for a star.

Things-as-they-are crept off
Borne on a snail;
"Better to creep," he said,
"Than fly and fail."

Things-as-they-ought-to-be
Fell from the star.
Safe on his journey went
Things-as-they-are.

II

When the tide is high, when the tide is low,
The sea-king's horses galloping go,
Their crests are white and their eyes are green,
And they draw the car of the great sea-queen.
Feet of foam in a field of spray,
The sea-king's horses gallop all day ;
But none may follow and none may know
Why, rain and storm, and billow and blow,
When the tide is high, when the tide is low,
The sea-king's horses galloping go !

III

Behind the lemon hollyhocks
And mignonette and purple stocks,
There lives a little fairy queen,
Her hair is gold, her gown is green ;
And, when there are no people by,
We play together, she and I.

I love the garden, and I love
The blue lake with blue sky above,
The water-lilies and the way
The fish who stare to see my play
Open and shut their mouths all day.

The gold fish are more red than gold,
They grow quite big when they are old ;
When they are well they're crimson-red,
And very pale when they are dead.

IV

It's very wrong to mind the rain,
It makes the hot earth cool again,
And all the flowers look nice and clean
With little puddles in between.

I do not mind the rain, not I,
It keeps the earth from getting dry,
But Mrs Cox had said to-day
That we might go across and play.

And when we go there, Jane and me,
She always lets us stay to tea,
And gives us cake and bread and jam,
And dripping toast, and sometimes ham.

And lets us turn her workbox out,
And drive her tabby cat about,
And tells us all about the war,
And David, who lived long before.

I love to stand and watch the rain,
But when the day is fine again,
We'll both put on our nicest frocks
And go to tea with Mrs Cox.

V

I rode my horse to Derby Town, one fine day,
The daisies and the buttercups he ate them all the way,
And when he passed a skylark he stopped to hear him
sing

And when he heard a donkey bray he ran like anything.

I rode him into Derby Town, he looked in all the shops,
He galloped up and down the streets with very sudden
stops,

He ate the apples off the stalls, he tried to eat a hat;
What is a man like me to do with such a horse as that?

I met a man in Derby Town; he said, "Your horse is
fine,

He's eating up a warming-pan; I wish that he were
mine,

If he can eat such things as that, he must be very
cheap."

I said, "He's yours for half-a-crown, to have him and
to keep."

So I walked back from Derby Town with half-a-crown
to spend,

I did not want the horse, not I, he never was my friend.
I went and bought a little cat, a tabby, black and grey,
And now she sits beside the fire and purrs to me all day.

VI

KING TIMON

King Timon went to stay in London Town,
In a sea-blue frock and a pair of scarlet shoes ;
King Timon wore a hat of beaver brown,
And buckles of a green stone, as a king may choose.

King Timon came back (hush !) from London Town,
In a little bed, asleeping, with lilies gold and white,
King Timon lay with lilies for his crown,
But not a word of greeting he said to us that night.

King Timon comes now, when the sun is low,
In his scarlet shoes, and his hat of beaver brown,
And he sings us of a land we do not know,
But it's far away from London Town.

50869
Cambridge :
PRINTED BY JOHN CLAY, M.A.
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 685 791 6

